

Montgomery County Council Public hearing on a supplemental appropriation and amendments to the
FY09-14 Capital Improvements Program of the Montgomery County Government PSTA and Multi-
Agency Service Park

Testimony of David Dise, Director, Montgomery County Department of General Service

July 28, 2009

Good afternoon. I am David Dise, Director of Montgomery County's Department of General Services and I am pleased to present testimony on behalf of County Executive Isiah Leggett in support of the County Executive's request for a supplemental appropriation and Capital Improvements Program Amendment for the Public Safety Training Academy and the Multi-agency Service Park.

This request, in the amount of \$48,316,000, is to purchase the 129 acre industrially zoned Webb tract and for master site planning. This purchase is a key step in the implementation of the Smart Growth Initiative – an initiative that puts in place important public policies for future jobs and housing at locations that rely on mass transit.

The Smart Growth Initiative recognizes that we must decide now how and where we will grow over the next 20 to 30 years and we must make our capital investments with forethought so that we do not frustrate the ability of future residents and elected officials of Montgomery County to meet their needs for quality jobs and housing. And, both for quality of life and quality of the environment, we need to ensure now that these locations will be oriented to mass transit.

The current PSTA is a facility in need of major renovation. We have an existing project under which an estimated \$33 Million will be spent to perform renovations to only the academic building. It must be noted that in performing this work and any other facility improvements at PSTA we will be foreclosing opportunities for the next 20-30 years at that site. To expend any significant funds on this site and then move from it sooner is fiscally irresponsible. Therefore, we seek to close out the renovation project and use the funds that would have gone into renovation towards acquiring and developing a new PSTA at the Webb tract that will provide best practices in public safety training.

The Universities at Shady Grove currently serves more than 3,000 students and is expected to grow to more than 5,000 students by 2015. They have already developed a significant health sciences presence with the establishment of the University of Maryland's PharmD program offered by its School of Pharmacy, the doubling of the size of the University of Maryland's Nursing program and the addition of Salisbury University's Respiratory Therapy program. USG's long term vision for the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center is to expand the University System of Maryland presence and to be a destination location in the health sciences and bio-medical sciences, adding more facilities, capabilities and academic presence. In Fall 2009, the University of Maryland College Park School of Public Health is offering an undergraduate degree in Public Health Sciences to USG. The School's Masters in Public Health will also be offered at USG in the near future. Plans are underway to bring additional graduate programs, specifically in health sciences, biosciences and bio-medical engineering in connection with the expanded research programs at the USM Center for Advanced Research in Biotechnology on the campus. These facilities will now support faculty research from the University of Maryland College Park and the University of Maryland School of Medicine and will house technology transfer

capabilities. Both the UM School of Public Health and School of Medicine will establish clinical trials relationships with regional hospitals and health organizations. These research ventures will support full-time graduate students, post-docs, and clinical and research faculty at USG working in the SGLSC.

The Johns Hopkins University has 60 graduate programs at its Montgomery County campus and 11 initiatives with Hopkins' scientists, federal installations and private researchers. Hopkins is actively growing its research partnerships. With its recent alliance with Suburban Hospital and the extensive NIH research funds its activities at the Life Sciences Center will continue to grow. The uses planned by the Universities at Shady Grove and Johns Hopkins cry out for a mix of housing types and market points. This need will be increasingly necessary and important. However, both the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center and Hopkins' Belward campus contain chain of title restrictions that will preclude any meaningful housing on those sites. That leaves the 52 acre PSTA site which must be cleared for both the housing and the Corridor Cities Transitway.

The County was visionary nearly 40 years ago and has enjoyed much success with our Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. While we still have a significant position in the biosciences industry, others such as Massachusetts, North Carolina, Florida, and San Diego are surpassing us. And competition continues to mount both within the State and internationally in this high paying industry. Standing still is not progress. It quickly becomes moving backwards. For our residents and our businesses we cannot allow that to happen.

Acquiring the Webb tract will also enable us to implement the vast majority of the Shady Grove Sector Plan vision for the County Service Park. We have made great strides by acquiring replacement sites for the Equipment Maintenance Operations Center, Highway Maintenance Services, and the Department of Liquor Control Warehouse. With the purchase of the Webb Tract we can relocate the MCPS Food Distribution Warehouse, the MCPS Schools Maintenance Facility and the Park and Planning Maintenance Facility. That leaves the school buses and related maintenance operation to address and we are working with MCPS to find a suitable solution for the buses.

The Webb tract has approval to build 23 warehouse buildings. We will place four government facilities on this site. This will be a significant reduction of the planned impervious area and a dramatic reduction in the traffic that would otherwise be generated from the Webb tract. We are actively engaged with the communities in the surrounding area and will continue to do so to ensure that our uses are well designed and that our occupants are good neighbors.

This purchase is cost effective. The land price is reasonable and the costs of acquisition and development will have offsets through reallocation of funds for renovation of the PSTA, and significant land proceeds from the PSTA site and the County Service Park sites plus the net revenues that will be generated from the redevelopment of the sites.

With only 4% of the county remaining for development, we cannot afford to make our needed investments in the wrong place thus foreclosing the ability to do great things in the future. We must focus on planning and accomplishing our growth smartly – we will need good and varied housing and quality jobs, next to mass transit. The County Executive urges the County Council to approve full funding for the acquisition of this property without delay.